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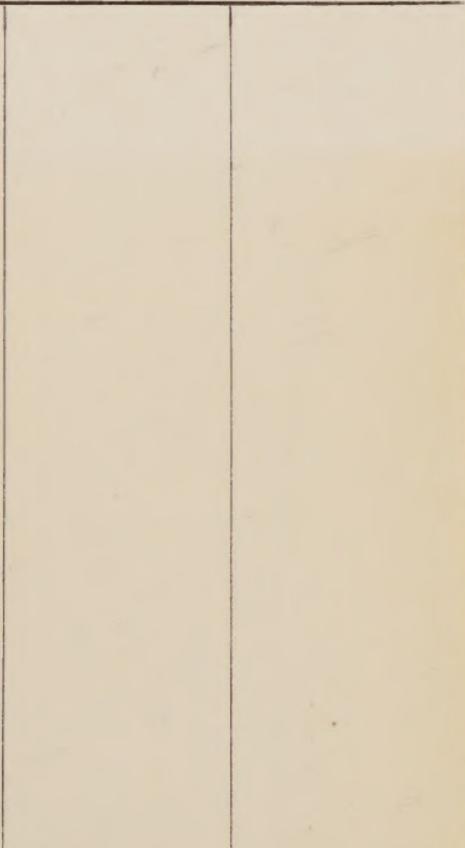
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STRAY THOUGHTS



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STRAY THOUGHTS

BENJAMIN H. ROBERTS

&

DELL MAE ROBERTS



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WANELL QUALITY GLASS

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEDICATION

To that power that leads to greater attainment,—be it God or nature, faith or reason, knowledge or inspiration, mental or spiritual, material or visionary, real or imaginary. As it measures man's conception of destiny, it is personal, and none but he can question; as it measures his actions in contact, it is of common interest.

To that power first manifest by individual incompleteness, and first expressed in appeals of posterity; which finds its continuation first in the home, expands itself on the open highways under the tolerant graces of liberty, and asserts its power in any way necessary to guard either; reaches its highest appeal in love; commands to duty and justice; reveals its beauty in all accomplishments, its greatness in tolerance, and its universal presence in sympathy; rewards with enlightenment, assurance, and promise; leads to an uncertain destiny or an unlimited continuation. A power that is not yet clearly defined, nor can be until man has neared the pinnacle of his attainment which, let us hope, is unbounded.

To all Gods,—whether they be Idols, Myths, Delusions, Visions, or Realities,—that lead to a greater Tomorrow, seek the simple truth, endeavor for construction, protect liberty, and serve posterity.

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STRAY THOUGHTS

REVERIE

Prelude

Who would dream by a pleasant stream
Or full moon over head.
Paint the moon by which I dream
Not up; or gone to bed,
Or crescent rim behind a cloud
Concealed, almost, from sight,
Or revealed through wooded shroud
Against a sodden night.

Let not vision be clear conceived
Or objects outlined clear.
Deny the things I have believed,
Vision is drawing near.
Dark paint the sky with angry storm,
Outline a rugged cliff
To show uncertain in its form
By moonbeams through a rift.

Let all my longings be denied,
An outcast I would stand,
And find that storm personified
The things that build a man.
Envelop me in cringing doubt,
Deny the hope of aid.
By unknown things we ferret out
Progress and men are made.

Let me stroll by pleasant streams
And walk the moon lit nite,
But place the substance of my dreams
Beyond a doubtful fight.
That I have fear I will admit,
To deny would be shame.
To fear and conquer keeps man fit
To proudly bear his name.

Who dares not breast against his chance
On fields where dangers tread,
Nor seeks to conquer and advance,
May say he knows no dread.
He stays beneath protecting wings
And prattles on with toys,
Too weak to seek the newer things
Or share the greater joys.

In a park where the timber abruptly halted
And sunlight played on a velvet surface of grasses
Flecked with wild flowers and extended,
Like the door yard of the fairies,
To the rugged edge of a precipice,
An artist, shielded from the sun by a Piñon,
Watched over the valley as he painted a picture.

I looked on as the valley was lifted
And transformed on the canvas,
Became almost a miniature portrait
Of an elusive something

That seemed to hover,
Like a protecting spirit,
Over the quiet valley.

Sometimes it seemed hidden in flashes of color
From the gardenlike Ranchos
Or in patches of whiteness,
Where adobe walls in irregular formation
Gleamed like crystal cities
In stories of another day,
Or more distant,
Concealed itself among the Pueblos
That stood like enchanted palaces,
Somber and brown,
In a shadowed niche of the canyon
And housed the traditions of centuries
Of a peaceful people
Who have withstood the ravage of time
In a faith that mocked at conquest
But strong in the continuation of kind.

I left him with his dream and his fancies
To walk through an aisle of the forest
That led to a cliff rock
Which arose perpendicular
Above the uneven incline of the mountain.

As I neared the massive obstruction,
What had appeared a smooth surface
Proved a much-weathered precipice

Creased with seams,
And rent from top to abutment
By crevices that zig-zagged, in patch work,
Without design or order.
A strong hold of the elements of earth
Crumbling before the bombardment of storm.

Shrubs, mosses and wild flowers
Clung to the cliff rock.
Near the top was a gnarled cedar
Striving for substance
And proclaiming life's enchantment
More by its mantle of mistletoe
Than from the green of its own foliage.
Nature, tolerant of destruction,
Gives beauty, through life, to decay.

On a log near the cliff I rested,
Afraid to approach lest it tumble;
Still, I reasoned,
It has stood thus for ages.
But to belie my assurance
A field of barren boulders
Were strewn in rugged disorder.
Once they were the cliff rock.

I slept, and, as I dreamed,
An old man with kindly features
Came upon the summit,
Placed his scythe in a piñon

And proceeded to find a harmony
That would fit both sound and color.

He played a weird contrast of sounds,
Then proceeded to mix moisture
With sunlight on a heap of débris,
Continually sounding the violin
As delicate shades were fashioned
And sprinkled over the mountain.

Near him, a dwarf of impish maneuvers
Dallied with a bubble
As he loosened the boulders
With the toe of his slipper
And tumbled them over the precipice,
Then stood obediently humble
As the aged one reproved him—
To begin again his impish maneuvers,
As the old man turned to his colors
Or winked in a humorous fashion
Down to where I was watching
And seemed to impart the message:
No use to inform the young rascal
That his maneuvers are helping!

A stir of wind,
A dreadful rumble,
A flash of fire
And as I awoke
The storm was there.

In an instant it blotted the day
With darkness
As dense as night without a sky,
And trembling
In fear of destruction,
Worse than just to die,
I groped for shelter
From its rage.
Let him who thinks he has no fear
Defy a mountain storm!

Pebbles in the icy gale
Cut like darts from a savage army.
As over the rocks I crept
Pierced and torn and bleeding,
Racked with wounds
That did not pain,
But eased like balm,
A deeper dread
That tore my soul asunder.
I reached the cliff
And crouching there
Caressed my wounds as treasures.
A swollen bruise,
A stinging gash
Or streaming blood
In the lightning flash
Bore witness of my being.

With bleeding hands
I felt my way
In search of ledge
Or cave to shelter me
Cringe, timid one,
An idol may verify your day;
But sounder substance
Is found within your soul
If you cast the stone away!

Abrupt it left me.
And I, an outcast,
Found nothing for support.
Alone I searched for substance;
I begged for reasons why.
No sense of being
Harkened back to me,
No sense of sight or sound,
No sense of odor or sense of self
Would prove my feet upon the ground,
Until death,
A phantom of the storm,
Swallowed up the sense of real
And touched my tongue with drops of dew,
Wafted fragrance from broken bough,
And dying blossoms' sweet perfume,
Touched the chill in icy wind
Pointed to a distant glow,
Whispered, "Peace to you,

Wretched one, die.
Peace, wretch, die."

Standing up I faced the gale.
The sting within its breath
Could give but assurance;—
Or death,
And better die to-day
Than hide a life away
In fear.

Submerge your soul in depths of peace,
Balm the touch of time,
Rest your vision in tinted light,
Harmonize the sound,
Cool your tongue with nectar drops,
Incense the air
With sacrifice of tender life,
Live by grace
And die a wretched thing;
But mix with mine
The stinging touch,
The morbid vision and harsh sound,
The rancid taste,
The odor of decay,
Bring care and pain,
They lend a fighting hand,
They prove my aim,
They let me live;—
A power.

And die;—

A man.

Storm, I grapple in your wrath,
To pull your sting
Or yield in death.
Resolved I started out to conquer fear.

A flash from the elements
Rent the blackness of the storm
And seemed to cleave the cliff above,
Lit up a cavern in its walls.

A grotto yawned
And in its depths
Revealed a hope
Beyond the dragon fear,
That blocks each path
To swallow up the wreck of "I,"
To scorch my soul
With flames its nostrils do exhale
Or yield before the force of will
To let me pass, a victor over fear,
And light a path beyond its rage.

Within, the roar of storm subdued,
And warmed by trusts
In which I dared believe
(The cavern that I sheltered in
Sheltered only me)
I peered around
And through the night

A light peered back at me.
Nor yet a light
But a yellow glow
That touched no object in the night
Or reached the outer edge of darkness,
But before the substance of its rays
Outlined a form bent low
Of one who wrote
As absorbed in interest
As was his light in darkness;
As if a celestial light
Haloed the handicraft of a sculptor
Who had chiseled from darkness
The spirit of endeavor.
Motionless it remained there;
Except the outline of a pencil,
Like a magic wand,
Moved to and fro,
In the golden glow of the halo.

Things not understood are masters.
Fears are built from unknown quantities.
They fall by analysis.
To calm myself I called the form a man.
It was the light that puzzled me.

Cautious, in fear my step upon the floor
Would stir him from his theme
And rising up would banish me
From a sacred scene;—

Or worse,
Would vanish from the world of real,
A phantom of my fear,
And slay the hope of sympathy,
From touch of kind,
That the form had promised me.
I moved toward him.

Oh, sacred things of common stuff!
A bit of string,
A tallow mass,
A candle made the light for me.
My soul raised up,
I almost sang.
A burst of sudden glee,
A rush of joy,
A peaceful quiet,
Fought with the fear in me.

As I stepped into the light
The pencil that had labored in the glow
Trembled in a palsied hand.
Perplexed, it wavered
Then like a stricken thing
Lay idle on the theme.

The form arose from a rustic bench
And stood a bit confused.
His hair, untrimmed, was almost white
And rumpled in a mass,
His beard a stubble field of grey.

His chin dropped down,
He stood as in dismay.
He stared at me,
A gawky wretch of woe,
His garments tattered, worn and soiled,
Unkempt,
A filthy man;
And in the presence of a being
More wretched yet than I;—
I laughed from a mature void of sympathy,
I ridiculed his plight,
And mirth borne from an empty soul
Resounded on the cavern walls
And echoed back, a dismal sound,
For he, the object of my merriment,
Stood up, a princely man,
As straight and sturdy as a knight.
His eyes lit up from fire within,
But still as cold as piercing steel,
And froze the laughter on my face
Into a silly grin.

The thin line of his lips
Held back a stern rebuke.
And poise of him
Outshone the garments that he wore.
While I,
Before the equilibrium he sustained,
Swayed and trembled
From an emptiness within.

My twitching lips,
My shaking knees,
Mocked at my command,
Would not obey a wavering will.
I prayed for death to swallow me.
I listened for his scorching words.
But instead
He stretched out a toil-scarred hand,
His lips grew full and round,
More caressing than a smile.
The light within his eyes grew soft,
But his soothing words were lost.
He drew me down upon a bench.
His kindness enveloped me.
And with the rude blanket that he wore
Enrobed my storm-drenched form.
Then in careful tenderness
Dipped the tallow near the flame
And oiled my bleeding hands.

Eased from pain
Yet morbid as a child
Who has transgressed,
On the altars of sacrifice,
Is bathed in tenderness
Known only in a kindred breast,
I grieved in the touch of tenderness
Not from a wound, or pain,
But that the moment that I erred
Could not be given back again.

Perhaps it is better so
That time is now,
And moments gone
Have left their mark
For weal or woe,
That "I" and "Now"
Is all of consciousness.
The past is moulded into form,
Chiseled on the types of kind,
Painted on the seasons' breath,
And assimilates for me
A power from forces gone.
The future radiates from now
Into an unmarked zone,
And only faith illuminates beyond,
So note the errors you make to day,
Impress them on your mind
As moments squandered here.
Accomplishments keep their own display
Engraved upon the span of time.

A great resolve of better things
Was born within my will.
I faced the coward I had been
And bid the fear be still.
I drew the sword of confidence
And aimed a blow at dread.
I met the dragon of my fear
And sheared his hateful head.
I looked the hermit in the eye.

I watched his soul expand,
As if he knew my confidence
And counted me a man.
He grasped my hand in glad delight.
I stood as straight as he
And knew the joy when man to man
Extends a sympathy.

Exalted far beyond the wreck of me,
An armoured knight,
Chartered with the will to be,
Became the stronger of the two.
I vowed a common weal with him.
We knew a common trust.
His was born from love of kind.
Mine was born from lust.

In the new-born strength
I knew no dread.
An egotist who held the faith
To be greater than its source
Built worlds on which to tread.
Became myself a thing of dread
For lesser things than I.
I looked beyond our candlelight
Into the blackness of the night,
For worlds to conquer and enthral,
And saw two coals of fire.
A beast was creeping from its lair
Within the cavern wall.

The worlds that I had built,
The conquest to be done,
The plunder of a vanquished foe.
That bloody battles won,
Faded in our candlelight.
My armor crumpled from a blow
Dealt by fear within,
Clattered on the rocky floor.
And I, a naked thing of doubt
From realms of faith cast out,
Into the blackness of despair
Fell upon the neck of him.
I withered in a dread.
I pleaded in his ear.
I cried upon his breast.
I prayed forgiveness.
I begged for tenderness.

The fiery embers coming near
First seemed low upon the floor
Then higher in the air.
A beast that stalked its prey
Advanced with stealthy tread.
Scarce a pace beyond our light
The fiery orbs stood still,
Now settling low,
Again they pause,
Then soaring up
Suspended in mid air,
Became scorching flames

Set in a dim outline of dread.
A demon's avalanche of teeth and claws
Seemed sailing at my head.

"It springs," I gasped,
And with a madman's fear
Dropped the blanket from my form
And crouched to meet the coming foe
With muscles in a strain
And head set low.
Conflict shielded me from self.
A sacrifice was I.
Hope aspires on carnage of the foe.
Doubt, you yield and die.

My heart beat steady in my breast
And throbbing flow in extended veins
Cleared my brain.
And made my nerves a thing of steel.
Fearless I would meet the thing
But not from common weal.
I knew a selfishness.

Rigid in a single aim;
To meet the death that threatened me,
I met the glowing orbs with mine
That flashed a battle fire.
I knew no bounds, no shape or form.
I strove to read its nature
By the light within its fiery eye.

I read a challenge;—It or me;
And from the savage breast of them,
Who stalked the wilderness for prey,
Who struggled then, for me and now,
Who yielded from the pride of self,
To call adversaries such as they.
To meet a common foe,
I called into the realms of time
That who should hear
Would quit his trail
And lend a hand to conquer it
That conquered me
Or minister to my wounded form
And share the victory.

It, that gives the call of kind,
Pleads a common cause.
It perishes an individual thing
But blending with the hope of them,
That succor to its fall,
Lives communal toward a common aim.

A single word was echoed out.
It was “help.”
Let him who laughs at me
Forget the ego of his soul
And listen to the prophecies
In the whispers of posterity.
“Unite your power
With power of kind

To better serve your day;
For all must pass
As wasted wrecks,
That life anew
May find its subsistence
From failure and decay,
And carve into the monuments
Of efforts gone
A deeper sense,
A truer line,
And softer tints
For future time.”

I called into the realms of kind
To bear me up
And claim by victory
The strongest force
As seeds to time,
And all of power to live and do
Surged for a mighty blow.
I would spend it all
To stand a victor unafeard
Or be a prostrate prey
Before a stronger foe.

Overwhelmed, I settled down
A lifeless heap upon the floor.
The beast had issued a call of kind
And set to riot
My forces of defence.

No claws or teeth
Had torn my flesh
Nor blow had fallen me
But being what I did least expect
It had vanquished me.

I sank from shame
And humbly prayed
That none should hear
The call I gave.
A burro of the common kind
That has made men laugh
By mock sagaciousness,
Won his sympathy
With doleful mien,
Borne his burdens,
Held his trust
With its ever present docileness,
Had lifted up its head
And brayed.

Shamed by his searching eye
And withered by his word
I wished that I could die
Or have reproof deferred.

"Oh, wretched night!
I die by what I do not comprehend;—
But yet, knowledge can not withstand
The touch of death.

As I proceed
I feel its breath;—
And if I knew all things
I could but discern
That time is now
And touch is consciousness.

"It is well to live and learn,
By touch of circumstance,
Of fear
With which death touches us,
And as we meet its challenge
Dispel its dreadfulness,
Build ourselves a greater power,
Mould our courage to defy.
The threats of ignorance
That fear the hour
When we must die.

"He who analyzes right
Walks more fully in the light,
But makes of one a multitude.
Division can not reach an end.
He starts an endless chain
Who does explain
That this is that,
And so;—and yon
And divides each into a smaller part;
Anon;—anon
His endless search for perfect blend

Is fallacy.
His work is never done.
He has in each a mystery
As great as he who holds
That one is all,
And all is one,
But builds himself a wider field,
A brighter light,
A truer sense of might and right.
Bends the powers to his will,
Knows more surely he is he,
But in the presence of forces diversified
Feels it less.
Submerges greed in sympathy.
Blends his power with tenderness.”

He accused me, “You are afraid.”

“My nerves are gone.”

“What feared you;—death?”

“Death I would have welcomed.
It is not that I go,
But what I leave by going,
Or that I stay,
But what I find by staying.”

“You have duties and dependents
That would be poorly served by others?”

"No."

"Then what mourns in your death,
Or grieves you in life?"

"Nothing."

"It is well said.

Emptiness is extermination.

There is no regret in turmoil.

No pain in conflict.

Neither a balm for soundness,

Nor inspiration from satisfaction,

Nor reward for idleness.

A ship goes out to sea empty,

Is lightly tossed.

The crew is idle on the deck,

Morbid in a fancied gale,

But loath to land,

For port or harbor

Has no welcome

For such an empty hull.

But load her down

With precious weight,

Submerge her water line.

She rides an even keel

And singing sailors laugh at toil.

They mock at storm.

They sight a goal beyond.

He who idly counts time
Lives not by his own power
But reckons with the graciousness
Of preordained destiny.
Before you have lived
You made others aware of life
By touch that promised.
If you fulfill that promise
You have earned the right to die,
But idly to spend,
From the coffers of our day,
The chattles of our kin,
To enslave another power
For pleasure's end
Is to use resources
(The tools of time)
For immunity from interests of kind.
To purchase ease
You spend opportunity
And there is delivered to you
Extermination.
Who has not served
May surely dread to die.”

He turned and kissed the comic face.
The donkey brayed.
I laughed and thought;
Two hermits of a kind.

"It is well you laugh.
It shows some confidence.
He who laughs seems to say
Even I am not so depraved as they,
The objects of the merriment.
One embraces among things present
That which seems most worthy.
Still I have need of you."
Remembering that I was present,
I humbly asked
"What would you have me do?"

"Would you, with a better knowledge,
Write an evener grace into the lines
And, with your strength,
Aid Solomon and I
In the necessary labors.
Then I will give to you
All that we may accomplish."

"I will lend you money."

"You would buy with gold,
The pride that want has willed me.
I perceived in you
Not a means to an end
But a continuation of an ideal.
I have submerged myself
To write the story of failure.

Unless you can see, in failure,
The force of progress,
The cause of endeavor,
The continuation of hope,
The inspiration of action,
The reason of existence,
Even the cause of the universe,
You can not aid me.
I hoped you would prove superior
But you are less in my ideal
Than the donkey who works with me.

"Things existing are stepping-stones.
One looks,
And observes the world he lives in,
Or listens and hears its sound,
Touches and knows its consistency,
Breathes and hales its aroma,
Partakes and becomes a part of it.
He is neither doomed or destined
But builds himself into the structure
Or else does not use his endowments.

"Man may master all things.
Born of conscious effort
Is past conscious typified.
Is endowed with faculties
That will perceive the present.
Endeavors and accomplishes a future.

Or idly consumes the waste
From the march of progress.

"Things preceding the present
Are foundations on which to labor
Or monuments to endeavor.
Beyond is utter darkness.
Perhaps an undefined obstruction
That must be chiseled away.
Surely an abyss yawns beneath
But can be no deeper or more dense,
Than the depths and darkness
Out of which man has ascended.

"All is darkness
Except as conscious beings
Have illumed it by endeavor.
Beneath man is an abyss
Out of which he ascended.
Above him a mountain
Where he receives substance
Unillummed, untouched, unanalyzed
But of ample consistency
To raise his foundation
If it is well chosen.

"No defined limits
Are ascribed to the mountain
Or certain dimensions
Or outline of form

Or given consistency.
It is shrouded in darkness
But from its bulk
Can be obtained material
That will yield to analysis
When torn from the darkness
And resting on the foundation
Which is illumed by reason.
If unfit for higher construction
Can be tumbled into the abyss.

"At first this seems useless.
But listen;—
As the waste plunges downward
A sound comes back from the abyss.
Labor on, have faith,
And the stones you have discarded
Will build up in the abyss
To the level of your efforts.
And should you not raise the level,
You have extended the fields
Of enlightened endeavor."

"For what should I labor?"

"A greater light."

"To what end?"

"Darkness."

"Then why labor?
There is dignity to preserve."

"You would be a glamorous godhead.
That which only glitters
Must surely be reflection.
The source of light illumines
And warms as it consumes.
Who chases his shadow
Catches it at high noon,
But has nothing,
And has lost the glory of promise.
He dares not forsake a beaten trail.
His shadow is swallowed by obstruction.
He must veer around.
At his zenith he is barren.
He must turn,
If he would still pursue it
Now an ever lengthening hallucination,
A phantom,
That leads him on to evening,
And again;—nothing,
It has vanished in darkness.

"He who seeks the source
That makes his being perceptible
Has an endless journey.
He perishes a failure
But is ever hopeful in the promise.
Becomes powerful and certain

In conflict with obstruction
And absorbed at noontide,
In the brilliancy of promise,
Knows not that he turned at the zenith.
He is aware of less obstruction,
For he has cleared a path
For his declining day.
His goal is lost
But did not vanish.
It continued beyond the horizon
When darkness obscured his vision.

"Only those who have purpose
Endeavor to retain endowments.
To accomplish ideals that promise.
To serve all things that serve him.
His reward is failure.
Endowments must be re-endowed
Or absorbed in idleness.
Ideals never quite attained
Else he be consumed,
But to accomplish
One labors from base to aim.
The base is always now.
The tools, all things perceptible.
Aim is the promise
That contact has conceived.

"If the surface where you labor
Is not well illumed

You will stumble
And be lost in the abyss,
Or a stone from the mountain
May tumble and crush you,
Then those near you
Will pause to level the surface,
And leave your level of endeavor
As a step for others.
Thus you live beyond consciousness
In the consciousness of others,
Are a power in their endeavors,
Inhabit their day.
Attain with their efforts
The joy in the promise
From that mystic light
That shines from a great height
But illumines only the foundation
And steps that descend to the abyss.

"Continually man has labored
Towards the source of illumination,
Or extended the steps
That lead into the abyss
To illumine the way
For beings not yet ascended
Into visible accomplishments.
And he who labors at either extreme
Becomes, himself,
A part of the radiance."

“What is life, and what death?”

“Life is light, death darkness.”

“What light, and what darkness?”

“To analyze darkness
Is to perceive its substance.
To perceive it,
It must be illumed.
Illumed, darkness does not exist.

“To analyze light
Is to discern its forces.
To discern is to liberate.
To liberate extinguishes.
Extinguished, does not exist,
But its forces are manifest
In all things perceptible.”

“But if I do not endeavor?”

“If you would cast your lot
With scum on tides of endeavor,
Froth of idleness,
Maggots of decay,
Stink of decomposition,
Defilers of heritage,
Profaners of posterity,
Thieves of time,
Then perish like bubbles of your kind;

Bask in the brilliance of light,
Burst and be gone.”

In anger he reproved me.
“Go!” he shouted.
“Go, the storm is lifted.
Go, find your self in endeavor.”

His fiery eyes scorched me.
The bony accusing finger
Pierced the marrow of my bones.
His tongue lashed me,
I feared his wisdom,
And edging out of the cavern
I welcomed the wrath of elements.
Crouched through the forest
Oppressed by forebodings.
Uncertain if destiny had doomed me.

The storm hung high above,
Like a heavy shroud.
Over the green forest
That wailed a great sorrow
Beneath the gloom of the storm
Which flashed a fire of destruction,
In contempt more than anger,
And played on the green of the pine
A consuming light
That searched the secret recesses,

As if the forest did not offend,
But concealed the object of vengeance.

Weakness guided me;
Through the same aisles I ascended.
Strength seeks no precedent.
Strength is the courage to continue
In the analysis of failure.
Failure is the absence of the real
That one conceives in vision.
To discern the liberated quantity
Would be success.

Vision incites action to attain,
But attained would consume
And leave no power to conceive.
However, who proceeds
Needs only vision.
He who returns
Has lost the vision
And seeks promise
In a new conception.

Perhaps, I reasoned,
The hermit is right.
I will go labor with him.
For it is better
To be a partner of a donkey
Than a parasite on hereditary lien.

Again I climbed the mountain,
Waded rushing torrents,
Labored through entanglements,
Unmindful of obstruction.
I arrived flush with hope
And entered the mouth of the cavern.

The flames burned low on the candle.
It flickered and fluttered.
It danced and disappeared,
To flash up again
And blink and jump and shimmer.
While shadows like ghosts imprisoned
Grimaced and grinned
In grawsome maneuvers
As they danced in the cavern.

On the floor of the cavern
Was the hermit
Struggling to rise,
To fall again
And tear at the neck of his garments.
To fight and struggle and fall.
Trembling as a ship grounded
Is torn between storm and its mooring.
Cast without pilot if free
On an uncharted ocean
And clings to the reef
In hope of resurrection.

As I came forward,
A trembling moment he stared,
As if uncertain of vision.
But in that moment
Searched depths in my nature
Unillumed by human touch before
And lit in me
A spark of common sympathy.

He feebly arose
And seated himself at the table.
Slow and deliberate he wrote
As of a great truth
That must be accurately weighed
To ascertain its value
Then looked out into the shadows.
Attentively listening
As if he awaited
A long delayed arrival.
Arose smiling
As one who welcomes a visitor.
Leaned again over his papers
And hurriedly signed a name.
Stood again erect,
A soldier at attention,
And seemed of a great height
And a glorious magnificence,
As the flames on the candle
Became even and steady
And illumed the cavern

As it expanded
Then as if caught by a gust of wind,
Was gone.

There was a thud upon the floor,
An echo in the rocky cavern.

I strained my eyes.

I called.

I listened.

Outside was the subdued rumble.

On the western horizon

A thin streak of clear sky.

The rest was;—

Gloom and me.

Who has not watched the pall of death

Settle on a friend

And asked of life:

Why this end?

And heard it answer back for them,

It is victory

Not for them,

But for aim,

If you keep the pledge

Your friendship gave.

The sound of storm died away.

The clouds lifted.

Until the sun shone full

And interred the mouth of the cavern

And transformed it
Into an enchanted chamber.

Brown stone walls studded with crystal
Caught the rays of sun
And flung them
One to the other
Magnified, glorified and hurried.
A silver light
Tinted with purple and pink
Of such delicate proportions
To be scarcely more than suggestions
And revealed;
Only death and silence.

On a table where the candle had burned
Was a remnant of charred cord.
On the floor the hermit lay
Still but strangely powerful.
Near his outstretched hand
A folder lay open.

A face smiled up at me.
It was neither girl nor woman
But a combination that merged them.
Sad but smiling,
Wistful yet doubtful.
Pleasant but stern in a purpose.
A bud endeavoring to blossom
But shadowed from the sunlight.

Touched by a sense of the sacred,
I placed the folder
Over the heart of the hermit,
Drew a blanket over his garments,
Smoothed the hair,
Spoke to him and listened.
I was praying.
Touched his cheek.
Sought the outstretched hand
And caressed it.
Saw in its palm
A crystal drop of water.
I wept;
And in the tear from my weeping
Observed a covenant;
As past to present sacrifices,
As life to death endeavors,
As time to eternity hopes,
As you to me have given,
So will I
Give of you to time.

Who weeps a tear
Has pledged, as I,
Himself to a cause
With time and death.
He reasons,
It is not best,
Still he knows
They laugh to ridicule,

Who see the old
Persist beyond the new.
Time is no true respecter
Of persistence,
But of power
Nor of age
But of accomplishments.

Collecting the papers
I went out for aid.
I thought of beastly marauders
And wondered what protection
I could place before the cavern.

As I debated,
Solomon came out of the forest
And I willed him a sacrifice.
I would tie him in the opening
And reasoned
That beasts attracted
Would be detained
Over the carcass of the burro.

Before I reached the sacrifice
A rumble
That quickened to a crashing roar
Chilled my soul,
Cursed my aim
And overshadowed me
With threats of dire malediction.

I turned to the cliff
From where the sound seemed to come.
No opening yawned above me.
No entrance remained to the grotto.
The cliff rock had crumbled.
As if it had stood thus for ages,
A dwarfed and gnarled cedar
Crested the mound of boulders
That closed the mouth of the cavern.

Above the mound of débris
The shafts from a setting sun
Played through the branches
Of a mistletoe-laden cedar
And cast shadows on the cliff rock.
The features of an old man,
Creased with lines of care,
Trembled as if to impart
A last hopeful message
Then seemed to smile
And receded in the twilight
As the sun sank down
Behind the purple of mountains
And sheened the rugged line of horizon
In the glory of promise.

FAITH

When you're down and things oppress you,
And the world is looking blue,
When your honest obligation
Is more than is due to you,
Set your working standards higher
Than they were before your fall,
For the chances are your interests
Did not meet your aim at all.

Far above a clear perception
Is the true perspective kept,
And it's not the less enticing
If you've made a slight misstep.
There's a halo left to failure
That illumines the darkest night;
If you keep your vision glowing
Faith will set the world all right.

If your vision will not merit
More than failure's darkest toll,
Tear it down and build another
From the substance of your soul.
Encompass all the arc above you;
Build an aim; strive to do it,
And its brilliance is not shadowed
From angles you must view it.

Buckle down and keep on striving.
If you fail no one can say,
That you did not spend an effort
That was worthy of your day.
That you fail is not considered.
Time will not your work defame,
If you keep the arc encompassed
As the substance of your aim.

FAILURE

Upon the carefree plains of youth
He spied a mystic dream,
Resolved himself to follow it
Down life's enchanted stream.
The vision capped a nearby knoll
Above the shady surge
Of waters, where the common run
Of human aims submerge.

But still the thoughtless one delayed
His journey to the hill.
His ambition said, you must go.
His answer was, I will,
Until his manhood spied again
The vision high above,
Upon the mountain slope of time
Entwined with care and love.

But still the thoughtless one delayed
His journey to the hill.
His ambition said, you must go.
His answer was, I will,
Until his longing spied again
The vision far ahead,
Haloed in glory high above
The mountain top of dread.

But still the thoughtless one delayed
His journey to the hill.

His ambition said, you must go.
His answer was, I will,
Until in later life there came
The mountain into view,
Black-crested with foreboding clouds.
Dark dread was all he knew.

The pleasant stream became a tide;
A seething, surging foam
Of struggling beings now denied
A faith or hope or home.
The pleasant shady nooks are gone.
The vision it has fled.
An angry tide now breaks upon
The barren slopes of dread.

SORROW

Rasp across my waking time
The thorny piercing bough,
Blur upon my conscious mind
The things before me now,
Hover hope beneath the outspread wing,
Blot vision from the air;
Suspended, a craven thing,
O'er the pits of despair.

Image of an unfilled trust,
Heap on my burdened pack
Censure of eternal dust
From those I can't bring back.
I, a fledgling from your thorny nest,
Hatched neath your dreaded wings,
Weary of your spell, would rest
Myself from grawsome things.

Cast high, as a buzzard poised,
Over the plains of death,
Shadows all but bleak bones,
And my own wretchedness.
Glimmering lights of the promised stars,
The trusts I did not meet,
Fanned to life through pinion bars
Are phantoms indiscreet.

Yonder mound of bleaching bones
Like shadows cast me o'er.
Departed trust shrieks and moans
My failures to deplore.
While my weary soul calls from afar
That I should join it there,
My shadowed life bears the scar
That misery must share.

I strive to crest promised mounds,
A beast-like serpent sits
With horny claws to tear me down
Into the darkened pits;
It pierces me with its wicked thrust,
And points my eye to stray
To the bleaching bones of trust
That I would put away.

Alone I grope neathe wings,
Before the beast I cower,
I fear the bird that ne'er sings,
I fear the serpent's power.
But the glimmer of the star was might,
I sheared the dragons head,—
Cleft the pinions through to light
In honor of the dead.

The shadow was my weakened will,
The buzzard my deceit,

Beasts that dragged me down the hill
Were mire upon my feet.
From out my soul were the shadows cast,
The bird in me did live,
Departed ones, could I ask,
My failures would forgive.

THE WIND

Shadowed forebodings stealthily creep
Over hopes we have sworn to keep,
Duty lags and superstition sends
The hollow prophecy of winds
To masquerade as destiny,
Transforming hope to misery.
O hollow winds, be still,
Your wail has power to chill
A mind that stands a gale of fact
If it be free to act—and die.
Speak your worst in truth.
But do not prophesy.

Breathe your worst in storm and cold,
Speak the death you dare withhold
Behind the veil of prophecy;
Whistle, mutter, groan and shriek,
Moan and wail, bang and squeak;
Tear the lock-stops from the door;
Shake the windows to the floor;
Twist the gables; bare the roof;
Sway the trees; work reproof
Upon the things that dare defy
Your call to death;
But do not prophesy.

Whirl and eddy, scream and puff,
Threaten, bluster, storm and bluff,

I mock your lustng ire.
Rattle, clamor, shake and twist,
Moan and murmur, howl and hiss,
Weight my mind with your fact,
Burden me and damn my act;
But muffled whispers, messengers of woe,
Hush—the life that burned so low
Has heard a call above your cry,
Bring despair and solitude,
But do not prophesy.

Howl and shriek your weirdest call,
“Death the heritage of all.”
Blatant mimic of the true;
Nip the bud that strives to bloom,
Now shadowed from the moon
By yon stone slab that marks the mound
Where my eternal thoughts are bound
In keeping of an unfilled trust;
Freeze my life blood if you must,
But ne'er suggest, eternal hope a lie.
Challenge me with death,
But do not prophesy.

Through lonesome hours of bitter tears
Your hollow sounds have filled my ears.
Prophet of the grawsome tale,
Whip my garments to a thread,
Tangle locks upon my head.
Perhaps some good is wrought

By the stinging blasts which brought
This bitter plight to me.
Speak, unbind me from your prophecy!
Curse your power, let me die!
Shelter me with death,
But do not prophesy.

The hollow winds have gone.
I see the wreckage they have strewn
As morning gilds the sky.
Vile wreck that fear has made of me,
Unmindful of the hollow prophecy
I still will cool the fevered lip,
Reset the plant the cold winds nip,
Build a housing for my trust,
Breast against the strongest gust,
Match its fury will for will.
The blasts may bring death,
But the hollow winds are still.

GRADUATION

So at last the day has dawned,
Promised day for which I pawned
Many active years of strife,
To balance my aim in life
With knowledge ordained by fact
In deciphered cause and act,
And revelations that wrest
Superstition from my breast,
Giving reason to my mind
Proving fact with cause and time.

Welcome graduation day;
Mile-post on the upward way;
Cast my power upon the beams
Where the real is weighed with dreams,
As the hourglass drops its sand
Steady through an ample span
That the reaper stays his blade
From the efforts I have made
To blend with my destiny
A light for posterity.

Selfish power to me it seemed
Crushed the visions that I dreamed,
Until in studies I cleft
Shadows that concealed myself,
And through shadows where I slept,
An inspiring light has crept

To illum a pathway out
From the shadows of my doubt,
To a more constructive view
Where in fact my dreams come true.

Maps and charts and printed page,
By Philosopher and Sage,
Chained me down through hours that roll
Dark across my unschooled soul,
While instructors, sorely tried,
Worked in patience by my side,
Served in battles grimly fought,
Opened up a field of thought,
Made my bondage liberty,
Bound the past, a slave to me.

Instructors of ages gone
Marked a trail to walk upon,
Weighed worth in sayings of sooth,
Marked the way with simple truth,
Laid of fact and tested rule
The corner-stone of the school;
Dreamed, but tore their dreams apart,
Mastered and preserved their art,
Wrote into the sacred creeds
Causes and effects of deeds.

Bold defenders bravely died,
They passed soldiers of defense
Proud in power, but killed their pride;

Seeking truth as recompense,
Now the school defends for me
Honored fields that set them free.
Still no honors can I claim
In fair education's name
Till by truth's enlightenment
I attain acomplishment.

Dear old school! your image still
Is acrest the promised hill,
Inspiration built across
The shadowed path that I lost
At your call that bade me climb
From the murk and clinging slime,
Through the portals of your door
To the real in dreams of yore.
Now a call that bids me do,
But old school! I honor you.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST

Vibrant with life's synthetic thrills
And poised above the base deceit,
Fair spirit of the wooded hills
Enthroned where plain and mountains meet;

Poised by the streams where shadows, rent
By searching sunbeams, do reveal
The care your throbbing heart has lent
In anguish that you would conceal;

Bathed in conflicts of selfish end
Where hope denied explored in vain
And built in failure greater men
Instilled with universal aim—

Tolerance is your social bond,
But justice to the wayward aim
Is written on the magic wand
That yields the power in your domain.

Alike servant's and master's brow
Know the soothing of your caress.
Alike the weak and strong must bow
Before your justice and redress.

Built in contact with your beauty,
And led through ruins of ages gone,

Man may step aside from duty,
But, inspired, he will still strive on.

In your lofty mountains hide him
When'er his soul is sorely tried,
And the patience self denied him
Will work again with civic pride.

Or cast him on your desert plain
And let him search his soul, alone,
Until he finds his care and pain
Are but the markings of his own.

Stretch out your hand and welcome all,
The weary, the hopeful and the weak;
Prostrate, the hurried selfish call
Where striving man and nature speak.

Transfuse in sympathy and love
The vengeful aim and selfish fight,
And wave your symbols high above,
Inscribed in honor, truth and right.

Hold up the wand and symbols fair,
With grace and dignity defend
Each worthy cause, and loud declare
The common weal of mortal men.

The frail disciple of despair,
Led through your ruins and storied land,

Half timid ventures, but your care
Sends him out a stronger man.

Fair goddess of the brave and strong,
Mother to the weak; who are blessed;
And blessing all the passing throng
Impart the spirit of the west.

THE RECKONING

Latent moment, despoiler of my day,
Shrouded phantom, of the knelling lay,
Ghostly demon, shadow from the deep,
Ghastly death mask, murderer of sleep,
Morbid perpetrator, intruder of my bower,
Stealthy marauders of the silent hour,
Unrobe! I heed your silent beckoning.
Today was mine, but now the reckoning.

Brilliant the morning broke with light.
Full strong my being filled with might
Trod forth the master of my will;
Conquered all, and was master still.
But now the victims of my might,
As dancing phantoms, haunt my night;
And I, dethroned, am doomed forsooth
To spend a silent hour with truth.

I knew no thought except of greed;
"Might is right," as my only creed;
Has proved a truth the things that lie
Destroyed come back to testify
To living things that know me still;
My weakness is my selfish will;
Each deed has wrung from me its toll
And carved its image on my soul.

A power combined of lesser things
Controls the destiny of kings,

Feeds the weakling and molds the mob,
Spreads the laughter and brings the sob,
Leads the armies, and turns the tide
Of selfishness to civic pride;
Tips the balance in love and hate,
Measures destiny, seals our fate.

In silent hours we may discern
That worth must hold the place we earn.
It is the bond of sympathy
That measures worth and destiny.
Worth I alone can not conceive.
'Tis things my fellow beings believe
My acts and aims to typify
That weigh the egotistic I.

Latent moment, balance of my day,
Ghostly demon, shadow of my way,
Stealthy marauder, my unshackled creed,
Morbid perpetrator, portrait of my deed,
Dreadful death mask, image of my will,
Direful dirge, echo of voices stilled,
Portray my deeds; tune the sounds to sorrow
That I may softer tread tomorrow.

HATE

Foul beast within my aching brain
Tear its substance into shreds,
Destroy the will lest I refrain
From the vengeance I have said.

Ah! will it, that ere I shall pass
The thing that I hate shall cringe,
And of my hopeless mercy ask,
In the dark hour of revenge.

I saw its touch upon the flower,
Then I watched it kneel and pray;
Now I deny the blossom's power,
And despise a godly way.

Strong set within my enraged mind
Is the passion to destroy.
Blot out all peace until I find
Its destruction and my joy.

Mistrust shall rest upon its deed,
My curse is on its every act,
Destruction of its work my creed,
Until it is dead in fact.

Tear loose the shackles from desire,
Release the manacles that hold.
Then cast my soul into the fire.
Foul destruction is my goal.

THE MORNING GLORY

Suspended from the cottage eaves,
Like a wood nymph's colonnade,
Netted masses of vine and leaves
Conceal the windows in their shade.

The tiny, tender, twisted buds,
In the green leaves hid away,
Peek out to see the merry floods
Of sunbeams that dance and play.

When time was young, the legends say,
North wind with the sun did wrest,
From the earliest break of day,
Till the sun sank in the west.

Then the weary bold contenders
Made a truce above the day.
One demand the sun should render
And the north wind it should lay.

All the blossoms shall be blighted
Of the forests' fairy green,
Then our quarrel it is righted,
Till the white frost nips the green.

On the morning lithe and nimble,
The sunbeams crept through the trees;
Set the blossoms all atremble,
And the buds curled in the breeze.

From the glow above the sunset,
Now the fairies roll at eve,
A myriad tiny budlets,
And conceal them in the leaves.

What of legend or of story;
Naught in life can well define
The mystery or the glory
Of the morning glory vine.

Perhaps the fairies in the night,
With a tiny magic wand,
Paint the blossoms by the star light
And are gone before the dawn.

But the cottage, it is nearer
To an omnipotent plan,
In eternal hope is dearer,
Dearer to the heart of man.

How soft the true hearts beat within.
With the blossoms smiling through,
Calmly willing that life should end,
As the morning lifts the dew.

There's a message in their dying
That enshrines the lowly dead.
Life is not in time defying,
But in happiness we spread.

DOBY

Oasis of the desert plain;
Enfold my weary form again
While I watch your wondrous spell
Over the seed and buds that swell,
And listen to the birds that sing
Their joyous heralding of spring.
I feel a power within my soul.
The power that makes the buds unfold,
At Doby.

From lattice shades of leafless trees
I watch the white clouds in the breeze.
Soft floating fancies drifting by
Unrobe my soul beneath the sky.
Nature shouts yet I dare not speak,
For as the sun plays hide and seek
With taunting mysteries in my blood,
New life unfolds from seed and bud,
At Doby.

I watched in Autumn's listless wise;
The blackbirds from the cattails rise,
Full fledged, to congregate and fly;
I missed the Killdee's plaintive cry;
And soon I wakened from a night
To watch a world, veneered in white,
Droop sad before a rising sun,

While I my journey had begun
At Doby.

Lone wanderer, prodigal, spent,
Weary traveler, homeward sent,
The blackbird, in the cattails brown
A Summer's nesting place has found;
Flits its wings; cocks its head askew;
Then calls and sings as if it knew
The secrets of the seed and bud
Astir beneath the black marsh mud
At Doby.

Nature's call will arouse to might
The dormant things touched with her light;
Then up from yonder coast-way thread
Weary travelers, bring their bed
To sleep beneath the spreading trees,
And build anew from what one sees
Through vernal hallways thrown upright
By leaf and branch against the night,
At Doby.

Weary traveler, homage take
Where lavish nature strives to make
An emblem to her graciousness,
Amid the somber spaciousness
Of desert plains that expand
With thirst-parched grass and barren land,
Where mirages may lead astray,

But nature waves a welcome day,
At Doby.

Here the weary travelers find
A sheltered nook to rest their mind,
To test their faith, and prove their will.
They find themselves, but linger still
Where barren deserts' somber hue
Is flashed with colors born anew
From growing things on marsh and sod,
And man inspired meets nature's god
At Doby.

THE DEVIL'S PAN

Where the skyline meets the sand dunes
Just across the river's bed,
And the stagnant pools of water
Reflect the moon over head,
Where the Coyote sends a challenge,
And the Owls from Dog Town call
To the silence of the prairie
With its silence over all,
There the silent herdsman watches
Through the lonesome hours of night
As he builds a dream of promise
In the sheen of silver light.

Yonder dune becomes a palace,
Yonder pool a crystal lake,
And the sage brush on the short grass
Forms of lawn and woodland take,
But the scene that most entraps him
Has no substance for its base;—
But a memory and a vision
Of a smiling maiden's face
Ever present in the moon light,
Framed within the palace door,
Reflected from the crystal lake
That was stagnant pool before.

From the barren sandy reaches
Of a dried-up river bed,

To the green and watered pastures,—
Like an overhanging dread,—
Is a task obscure and clouded
That the strongest heart will try,
If you limit your conception
To the vision of the eye.
There's a time that you must travel
From the failure of today;
And you need a strength of vision
If you tread an unproved way.

May bright visions gently lead him
From the drab and sordid truth
To the realms of dream and promise
That enriched his fickle youth.
In the morning, with the daybreak,
With the long night's vigil through,
He will laugh and jest and banter
As a cowboy likes to do.
But when his lone watch is silent
Set his longing spirit free
As he takes the trail with cattle
'Twixt Englewood and Ochletree.

Through the breaks along the Beaver
To that flat and level land
Where horizon ever rises
To rim in the devil's pan,
The incline reaches ever upward
To a panoramic view

From the center of a basin
That moves as our shadows do;
Keeping one complete encompassed
Down in the center of a bowl
Where a barren, trackless desert
Torments the imprisoned soul.

Perhaps a lake upon the skyline
Comes to shimmer in the sun
With its wide and sandy beaches,
And in colors overdone
Small villages quiet and shady,
Or a lonely farmhouse stands,
Or the skyline of a city
Is outlined upon the sands.
But the herd moves slowly onward
As mirages disappear,
Or change from place and outline
As the drifting herd comes near.

Through the day a ceaseless drifting
Where no certain trail has led,
With the dust trail winding backward,
And the unmarked rim ahead.
Always in the center plodding,
Rimmed to left and rimmed to right,
Start at center in the morning,
Rest at center through the night.
Moving with no sign of progress,
But their mood is proof of gains

As they urge the lagging cattle
With the ballads of the plains.

Unbounded by the conscious mind
The sheened arc of visions spread
In slumber's peace to distant realms
Where no mortal dares to tread.
Then the ideal of perfection
Spreads over the devil's pan,
Millennial presentations,
And a guiding Angel's hand
Leads the reckless cowboy dreamer
Through the blossom-bordered lane
Where youth unchecked profaned his dream
And denied his youthful aim.

By mistakes he gains a knowledge,
Else he sinks beneath the tide
Of those who work at common tasks
And hide failure with their pride.
If he raises up above them
He must strive to cancel out
From mistakes and barren failures
Consuming fear, dread and doubt.
And his vision even failing
Still may lead a proven man
If he has a faith to travel
On his failure's devil's pan.

Strong, silent men of deed and aim
Always open up the trail,

Kind, patient men who bear their pain
When hopes and aim seem to fail.
With faith to tread the trackless bowl
And withhold himself apart,
Man finds an answer from his soul
To conceal an anguished heart.
Who treads in fields unmarked before
Grows, as he, a greater man
Twixt Cimarron and Palidor
On his unmarked devil's pan.

THE SPIRIT OF UNREST

A fiendish phantom of desires,
Robed in a sparkling, spotless dress,
Bathed in ambition's glowing fires—
The cunning spirit of unrest.

She flaunts my efforts when I try
A staid and useful life to lead,
And beckons as she passes by
To taunt my plodding with her speed.

Upon the dusty trail she trots
With a fiendish, chuckling sound
Murmuring of secluded spots
Wherein content is ever found.

She points me to a hallowed nook,
Where I should work my dearest aim.
Then beckons on if I should look
And laughs my simple faith to shame.

She bids me seek a greater cause
And take my way beyond the hill;
Yet ridicules if I should pause,—
And sets unrest upon my will.

I caught the outline of her face—
The death-mask of my conscious will.
I willed my cot a goodly place
And bid the luring call be still.

Upon himself he has no faith,
Or trust in labor's balanced score,
Who stops not in some quiet place
And roams or looks beyond no more.

TOMBOY

Besmirched urchin, unkempt and boyish clad,
Begrimed infant, your wayward plight is sad.
You thoughtless cast away your childish grace,
Dauntless you mask the blossom of your face,
Debased, deny the call of childhood's charm,
But fearless seek to prove by strength of arm
Yourself an answer to a mother's joy.
Repent before it is too late, Tomboy.

Sunburned lassie, boisterous and amply strong,
Fearless commander of the village throng
Of mischief making imps, girl gone astray,
Pranked in boyish maneuvers through the day,
And tossed at night upon a downy bed
To troubled seas or battlefields made red
With the valiant blood of the soldier toy
Held caressingly in your arms, Tomboy.

Brazen maiden, bedecked in scant attire,
Pawn your simple modesty to acquire
A masculine grace to your nymph-like form,
Bold as a knight before a battle storm,
Compete with man and turn his pride to shame,
Invade his fields and beat him at his game,
Deny his supremacy and destroy
His watchfulness and lose his care, Tomboy.

O shameless bride, before the altar bent
To take the pledge of life's sweet sacrament;

Unblushing, miss the symbol of the flower;
Assured you stand, the master of the hour.
Denied of sweet girlhood's glorious dreams
You've built of womanhood a sphere that seems
Sufficient tempered from the soul's alloy
To sail the troubled seas of life, Tomboy.

Kind thoughtful mother, blessed with rapt intent
To keep the trust life's faith in you has lent,
Full efficient to ply your watchful care,
Justly proud, your wondrous nature share.
The interests of an active life have filled
A nature sweet and strong enough to build
A name false modesty can not destroy.
"Mother" enshrines the edifice, "Tomboy."

Aged pilgrim, paused where death's shadows hover,
You were urchin, lass, maid, bride, and mother.
Wide expanded the actions of your day,
Unbounded by what men should do and say,
The logic of your life helped to expand
The woman's sphere as broad as that of man.
Victor of the unmapped seas, "Ship Ahoy,"
All honor to your fearless voyage, Tomboy!

JOY

There flows in each conscious mind
A tide of power personified,
Full strong to will what we shall find
Of joy and grief, doubt or belief,
As we breast the span of time,
Always groping, searching, hoping
For the sense and touch divine
That will empower our conscious hour
To be master of our kind.

With simple faith they may blend
The story old of hidden gold,
Concealed at the rainbow's end;
They may not see or reckon me
As the joy that interest lends
To every day, in work or play,
If I am permitted in,
Dancing, prancing and enhancing
Common things of common men.

From the soul the fountain flows
That will sap or will enwrap
The celestial spark that glows,
In another striving brother
As joyously on he goes,
Smiling through some work he must do
Before his day's work can close,
Then with delight can enter night
With night's peace and quiet repose.

I am joy to him who wills,
Flowing, gushing, halting, rushing,
Through the active life that thrills
With a conscious might for the right,
And denies the greed that kills
His interests in his fellow men,
But sips from the cup that fills
'Neath my fountain's rainbow mountain
That man's common effort builds.

Drenched in the sparkling spray
Of my fountain's rainbow mountain
Spanned across the arc of day,
Ever crossing, dancing, tossing
Bubbles in the bright array,
What care I, yonder passer-by
May jeer at my merry play
And scurry through the mystic hue
Of his life's enchanted way.

I partake each small delight,
Toiling, resting, laughing, jesting,
Balance for each act of might,
Testing, weighing; measure paying,
Always sponsor for the right,
Throbbing, living, justice giving,
Illume dark and shade the light.
Busy working, never shirking,
Paint the day, and calm the night.

DOUBT

When the glamour is gone
And the tide runs low,
When the sun on the slope
Wanes in fading glow;
When brighter things of life
Dim with pain and grief,
When the storm-driven ship
Veers to rocky reef;
When life is proven not
As our dreams have been,
Fear affirms—life once gone
Never comes again.

UNCERTAINTY

What subtle substance made
The thoughtful hour
On divine power
In yonder quiet shade.

Empower my mind to read.
What is the soul?
Power to withhold,
Or power destined to lead?

Night comes, but still I stay
Upon the beach
Where wild waves reach
To drag the beach away.

What inspiration sent
My thoughts to drift
To cloud-rimmed rift
That shafts of moonbeams rent?

Those mystic beams that make
A glow at night
Of silver light
Against the moon-kissed breaks!

Perhaps a Hand to guide
A weakened boat

That powerless floats
Upon the restless tide.

Roll waves, dash high and wide;
My own belief,
Like yonder reef,
Is changing with the tide.

My soul revolts to meet
The test of faith,
In divine grace,
The waves cast at my feet—

A youth from ocean's grave,
Clasped to his breast
A dead child rests,
No Hand was on the wave.

Above the moonlit bay
The wooded hills
With echo fill.
The grey wolf stalks for prey.

Can death alone define
What is the soul?
And where its goal,
If carnal or divine?

Only the things that last
In history

And memory
Can linger when I'm passed.

What one can question then.
My own concept,
If faith is kept
With faith of mortal man?

Fair youth who bravely died,
'Twas chivalry,
Not destiny,
That gave you to the tide.

PASSION

Unguarded course of flame
Approach and sear desire,
Char the substance of my aim
In your fury of fire,
Blot from records of my name
The balance page of care.

Gardens that high hopes have tilled
Droop like a withered weed,
The fragrance from blossoms spilled
Is lost in fumes of greed;
Scorching tongues of flames have killed
Harvests' promise of seed.

Hopes I threw above the past,
Like dream ships to embark
For visions that I had cast
On life's eternal spark,
Writhe before the glaring blast
And fade from vision's arc.

The flames of my passion sin
Surround like prison walls,
All of life is wrapt within
A single moment's call,
All the things that should have been
Are gone before my fall.

Your substance I can not discern,
My touch you would withhold,
'Tis your flames my soul has burned,
'Tis glamour that enfolds;
Your enchanting glare has burned
The vision from my soul.

Enamored stuff, don't deny
My touch, but pacify
Longing nature's frenzied cry;
Your flames do not satisfy.
Bear my touch, enhance my eye,
Envelop, though I die.

THE PASSING MOMENTS

Time with power to defame,
Bring not the things of past,
But encompass in my aim
All that future days could ask.

From the conscious touches known
The worthy I still need,
But from past I have not grown
If vision does not lead.

Fleeting moments pass away,
Your memories linger sweet,
But to live a yesterday
Is shackles on my feet.

Things departed from my sphere,
As I rise to meet dawn,
Inspire and linger near
As I strive to carry on.

SIXTEEN

Silence, break your grawsome spell,
Shriek, murmur, moan or wail;
Sinister sounds, suggestions of hell
Would sweeter be than is your tale.

Oh! could I discern a sound
In that vast, silent span
Beyond the sixteen years where I found
A fairyland at my command.

Mystic dreams of fairy days
Still float with dolls and toys
On the vista where encroaching haze
Shuts out the world of future joys.

Or is sorrow written there?
Oh, silence and suspense!
Is the shadowed future dark and bare,
Or filled with labor's recompense?

Silence, speak! at last a sound,
The whispered voice of time
In this doubtful, restless soul has found
An answer to this life of mine.

Each day answers for its own.
'Tis well,—those dreams of mine,
Like a magic span, today were thrown
Between my sweet sixteen and time.

DIVINE MEDITATION

A single ray—
From light of day—
Divided seven times—
Will transfuse—
To many hues—
As they unite—
Divide—
To scatter on the countryside—
Each its personal touch bestows—
Color to the fields—
The green of leaf—
The lilies white—
The red of rose—
Or congregate upon the pansies' bloom—
Until autumn's breath with age confuse—
And winter—
Drab with its sinister suggestions of night—
Snuffs out the light—

Think you they are gone?—
Pluck from yonder tree its deadliest bough—
Agitate its hushed repose—
Oppose its form—
Twist it on the stone—
It smokes—
A spark appears—
Ah! it bursts out into flame—

There is the light that died—
On autumn's countryside—
The touch of time and active force did not destroy—
But willed them to an aim.

SECULAR MEDITATION

Catch from yonder breath of air—
A particle—
Magnify—
And find—
A planet of our kind—
Of living things—
That make a cycle of consciousness—
Complete in purpose, love and hope—
Before it registers on your mind—
Now magnify again—
A universe has grown—
Of planets, satellites and suns—
As complete in miniature—
As is your own—
Or look into the evening sky—
Extend your vision there—
The stars that you behold—
Are floating specks—
(Like the particle magnified)—
To greater beings—
That move across a span of luminaries—
To them—
As sands upon the shore of sea—
And we to them—
Are as your particle to us—
Nor stop your vision even there—
Mysteries confront their searching mind—
Else they question not—

In fear it be divine—
Extend your vision where you will—
And find—
Your universe is but a particle—
Compared to space and time.

TO MOTHER'S ANNIVERSARY

Today is yours—
—our treat.

Time scores—
—still it's sweet

Just to know—
—in smile and tear

That time may go—
—but you are here.

A sentiment—
—still it's true

We are happiest—
—that you are you.

Mother, dear—
—we can not say

What we feel—
—about today.

We try so hard—
—but, oh heck!

Our very best—
—is just a speck

Upon the sea—
—of flowing pride

That you are still—
—at our side.

We count the candles—
—and we know
We are nearer—
—as we grow.
We seek expression—
—year by year
But can not improve—
—“Mother dear.”

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